DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 241 480 SP 023 890

AUTHOR Ryan, Joseph F.
TITLE Modifying Attitudes of Pre-Service Secondary Education Students toward Discipline in the Classroom.
PUB DATE Jan 84
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association (Dallas, TX, January 26-28, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Change; Classroom Techniques; *Discipline; Higher Education; *Preservice Teacher Education; Reinforcement; *Secondary School Teachers; Student Teaching; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Effectiveness; Teacher Response; Teaching Methods; *Teaching Models
IDENTIFIERS *Canter Model of Assertive Discipline; Student Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

The problem of discipline has consistently headed the list of concerns of secondary education students enrolled in and graduated from Northern Arizona University's College of Education. To address this issue, the Lee Canter Model of Assertive Discipline was adopted in the preservice training program. This model calls for specific, observable rules (five or six maximum) introduced and explained by the teacher. A list of consequences, articulated by the teacher, becomes operative when students fail to observe the rules. A study sought to determine the extent to which preservice secondary education majors modified their attitudes toward classroom discipline after exposure to the Canter Model. Thirty-seven students participated in the study and responded to a pre- and post-questionnaire which measured changes in their attitudes toward discipline and confidence in dealing with high school students. An analysis of results indicated that the Canter Model is effective in improving attitudes and confidence. (JD)

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ED241480

Modifying Attitudes of Pre-Service Secondary Education Students toward Discipline in the Classroom

A Paper
Presented at
The Annual Meeting
of the
Southwest Educational Research Association
Dallas, Texas
January, 1984

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Joseph F. Ryan, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Secondary Education
College of Education
Northern Arizona University
Flagstaff, Arizona 86001

Currently serving as
Assistant Superintendent
of Instruction
Deer Valley Unified School District
Phoenix, Arizona

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Introduction

Based on results of needs assessments completed by secondary education students currently enrolled in Northern Arizona University's College of Education and responses of those who had already graduated and entered the teaching profession, discipline topped the list of concerns. As a result, a concerted effort by the secondary staff to address this issue resulted in the adoption of the Canter Model of Assertive Discipline in the pre-service training.

Approximately one-fourth of the class time in "High School Teaching Methods" is devoted to the various aspects of this model. Although the professors felt strongly that this preparation filled a serious void in the training of secondary education majors, there were no data available to justify the Canter training component and the class time it required.

Rationale for the Study

Northern Arizona University's "High School Methods Class" is offered during the semester in which the prospective teacher candidate student teaches. As mentioned, a great deal of time and effort are expended in order to assist the pre-service candidate in "getting ready" for the student teaching experience. The overriding concern is that relating to discipline and candidates questioning whether they can function successfully in a classroom with secondary education students.

Since one's ability to control an anxiety provoking situation is dependent on his or her perception of the problem and the expressed confidence level relating to potential classroom discipline, it became increasingly important to determine whether the Canter Model of Assertive Discipline was serving the needs of the preservice secondary education students, particularly in light of the time and effort dimension.

Program Description

The Lee Canter Model of Assertive Discipline includes six training films where he discusses the major elements of his program. In short, he includes a rationale for classroom control to ensure teaching and learning; further, he discusses a system that enables the classroom teacher to meet his or her needs while meeting the needs of the students, too. The system calls for specific, observable rules, five or six maximum, that are introduced and explained by the teacher. The system also includes a list of consequences, again articulated by the teacher, that becomes operative when students fail to observe the rules. The consequences are graduated, i.e., upon the first rule violation a student is given a warning. If the student persists, he is then awarded a consequence whose purpose is designed to redirect student behavior, e.g., a 15 minute after school detention. Should he continue - 30 minutes of detention. Finally, a trip to the office and/or a call to the parents may be in order. Naturally, there are provisions for in-school suspension and other such "consequences" if the student's behavior warrants such extreme measures. An example of a teacher's Discipline Plan might look like this:

Classroom Rules	Consequences
1. Be in your assigned seat-location, ready to work, when tardy bell finishes ringing	1. Warning (Name on board)
2. Bring paper, pencil, books on completed assignments everyday	2. Name✓ (15 min. detention)
3. Keep hand, feet, books and objects to self	3. Name✓✓ (30 min. detention)
4. No swearing, rude gestures, cruel teasing or put-downs	4. Name✓✓✓ (30 min. detention and phone parents)
5. Follow my directions	5. Name✓✓✓✓ (30 min. detention, phone parents, principal's office)

The successive consequences may follow one or any combination of rules violations, e.g., a teacher may warn Johnny when the student is observed out of his seat; then, a ✓ mark is recorded and a 15 minute detention is awarded when Johnny fails to have his paper and pencil.

The teacher's discipline plan includes an elaborate system for a variety of positive reinforcement, too. For a teacher's discipline plan to succeed it is vitally important that he or she do both:
1. reward students individually and in a class-wide format, and
2. administer consequences in a consistent and fair manner.

Purpose of the Research

To determine the extent to which pre-service secondary education students modified their attitudes toward discipline in the classroom.

Description of the Participants

Thirty-seven secondary education students comprising two sections (classes) of the "High School Teaching Methods" course at Northern Arizona University's College of Education participated in the study during the spring, 1983 semester (See Table 1). Although physical education (9 participants) and art education (5 participants) represented over a third of the subjects, it is also true that every secondary major offered at NAU was included.

TABLE 1

Distribution of Subjects by Major

Major	Total N	%
Physical Education	9	24.3
Art Education	5	13.5
Spanish	2	5.4
History	2	5.4
Social Studies	2	5.4
Home Economics	2	5.4
Mathematics	2	5.4
Music	3	8.1
English	2	5.4
Industrial Arts	2	5.4
Industrial Education	3	8.1
Biology	3	8.1

Description of the Research

The instrument, a semantic differential designed tc measure a subject's perception of the concept Discipline,[1] was administered to the participating pre-service candidates on the first day of class; treatment followed immediately, consisting of ten class days of one hour each - a ten hour component. The post assessment was administered on the last day of class - six weeks after the conclusion of the Canter Model discipline component - in order that the Hawthorne effect could be diluted as much as possible.

The instrument directed the participants to respond to the concept, Discipline and twelve polarized adjective pairs along a seven-point continuum.[2] To guard against a subject going down the list and checking the scales all at the same point, four of twelve adjective pairs were reversed (See Appendix I). In addition, two other concepts (Teaching and Curriculum) with similar sets of polarized adjective pairs were used in an effort to "mask" the specific purpose of the research.[3] Results of the research are displayed in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Comparison of Pre-service Secondary Education Students' Attitudes Toward Discipline in the Classroom

Adjective Pairs		N	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	t - Value	df	Sig.
1. Good	- Bad	36	3.0833	2.0833	4.51	35	*
2. Heavy	- Light	37	3.1351	3.2703	-.61	36	
3. Active	- Passive	37	5.0811	5.4865	-1.35	36	
4. Quick	- Slow	37	2.8649	2.1622	2.87	36	*
5. Full	- Empty	37	3.4595	2.2432	4.95	36	*
6. Systematic	- Disorganized	37	3.1351	2.0811	3.81	36	*
7. Difficult	- Easy	37	3.0541	3.5135	-1.59	36	
8. Unfair	- Fair	37	2.4865	1.8919	2.88	36	*
9. Relaxed	- Intense	37	3.3243	3.6486	-1.21	36	
10. Strong	- Weak	37	5.0541	5.1892	-.61	36	
11. Rough	- Smooth	37	4.0811	2.8649	4.78	36	*
12. Calm	- Nervous	37	3.6216	3.7838	-.54	36	

* Significant at the .05 level; the t value was equal to or greater than 1.96.

Results

Of the twelve indices reflecting the participants' attitudes relating to discipline in the classroom six were significant at the 0.05 level using a two-tailed t-test. After the treatment (five weeks after the conclusion of the treatment) respondents indicated that their perception of discipline in the secondary classroom was significantly different than it had been eight weeks earlier. Specifically, with No. 1, as a group they felt "Good" as opposed to "Bad" in terms of discipline; with No. 2, "Quick," not "Slow." As a teacher using the Canter Model, one is quick: he or she rewards or issues warnings and/or consequences immediately. "Quick" suggests that the participants feel up to the task, i.e., armed with procedures that will assist in resolving problems. In addition, No. 6 indicates that they have a system to rely upon - a significant finding since the Canter Model stresses having a "Plan of Action" before problems arise. Having a system also relates to No. 8, "Fair" - "Unfair"; the issue with the Canter Model is the student's behavior, not the student; thus, a participant should agree that the system is as fair as one can make it. The "Rough" - "Smooth" dichotomy of No. 11 is also related. If one's approach to discipline is systematic and objective (fair) the corollary is that "smooth" should follow. A teacher who is in charge and feeling confident believes that a systematic approach to discipline should flow from instruction to disciplinary action and back to instruction with a modicum of disruption: the transition should be "smooth." The Canter Model stresses such.

Conclusions and Implications

The research appears to substantiate the time and effort expended on the Canter Model of Discipline in the "Secondary Methods" class of Northern Arizona University's College of Education. As mentioned very early in this paper, secondary education majors have consistently identified "discipline" as their greatest concern. It is imperative that the curriculum taught ensures that the pre-service secondary education candidate's entry into the profession be an auspicious one. Therefore, the Canter Model of Discipline will continue to be the major vehicle of instruction. Further, efforts to enhance the didactic component of the discipline model will be explored. Role-playing, discipline simulations and practicum modules at the local secondary school should be considered. Implications of this research are self-evident. A non-clinical training program that purports to modify students' attitudes toward classroom control is effective and should continue. Other programs at other institutions preparing teachers may also wish to review the Canter Model of Assertive Discipline and Northern Arizona University's training program.

Future Research

Changing attitudes of future teachers in regard to their perceived ability to discipline secondary students is desirable and necessary. The limitations of this before and after design are obvious. We can argue that the program did cause the resultant changes in attitude - Outside influences on participants in regard to classroom discipline are indeed minimal since no other course in the time period is even remotely related to discipline - but we cannot avoid the question.

Further, we must be concerned about the potential weak link between attitudes and behavior. Therefore, that which should occur next could approach 1.) a true experimented design, and 2.) a follow-up study whose purpose is to determine the relationship of the pre-service experience with the Canter Assertive Discipline Model and success of the first-year teacher in the classroom.

The former requires a control and experimental group; the latter requires repeated classroom observations of both groups to ascertain the effectiveness of the initial training, i.e., Do those subjects trained with the Canter Model of Assertive Discipline have better control of their secondary education students than do those of the control group?

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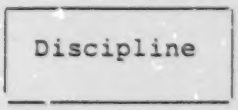
Appendix A

Semantic Differential Response Form



How I feel about ...

Discipline

1.	Good	:	:	:	:	:	:	Bad
2.	Heavy	:	:	:	:	:	:	Light
3.	Active	:	:	:	:	:	:	Passive
4.	Quick	:	:	:	:	:	:	Slow
5.	Full	:	:	:	:	:	:	Empty
6.	Systematic	:	:	:	:	:	:	Disorganized
7.	Difficult	:	:	:	:	:	:	Easy
8.	Unfair	:	:	:	:	:	:	Fair
9.	Relaxed	:	:	:	:	:	:	Intense
10.	Strong	:	:	:	:	:	:	Weak
11.	Rough	:	:	:	:	:	:	Smooth
12.	Calm	:	:	:	:	:	:	Nervous

Footnotes

1. Carol Taylor Fitz-Gibbon and Lynn Lyons Morris, eds., How To: Measure Attitudes (Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Evaluation, 1974) pages 18-19.

2. Charles E. Osgood et al., The Measurement of Meaning (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1957), page 327.

3. Charles R. Hopkins, Understanding Educational Research (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1980), page 300.